# TIKOPIA SONGS

## Poetic and musical art of a Polynesian people of the Solomon Islands

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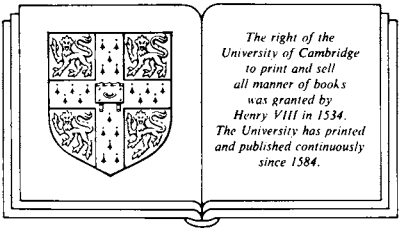


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## THE NATURE OF TIKOPIA SONG

Any record and interpretation of cultural material by an anthropologist is bound to be imperfect. This applies particularly to aesthetics, where concepts are hard to fix, and individual reactions likely to be widely variable. So it is with Tikopia poetry and music.

In western literature statements about the nature and significance of poetry have abounded for the last two thousand years. In modern times George Steiner, for example, has given an illuminating, even exalted interpretation of poetry and music. He stresses the way in which western poetry has led towards music, passing into music when it attains its maximal intensity – which may mean when it seeks to dissociate itself from clarity and the common usages of syntax (Steiner 1969: 43, 49, 64). Steiner's insistence upon 'the indivisible origins of poetry and music' rests perhaps upon a conception of music in the widest sense, in which vocalisation of patterned words of itself produces a metrical and melodic arrangement. Tikopia practice conforms broadly to Steiner's principle, but in a even more integrated way. For in Tikopia a poem is composed *as a song*. Indeed, to treat a Tikopia song simply as a poem, a patterned arrangement of words without recognised tonal intervals, occurs for the Tikopia only as a learning device, and would be ultimately meaningless without the melodic referent. The musical frame of reference for the poem is in general pre-existent, set by traditional pattern, though a composer may exercise some individual creative power. Moreover, a Tikopia poem/song is commonly produced, not simply for performance in isolation, but as an accompaniment or stimulant to action of a further kind, as dancing, mourning or ritual celebration. Tikopia songs, at least in a traditional setting, were acted out; there was no equivalent to an anaemic western platform recital, with severe separation of performers and audience. One might go further than Steiner and argue speculatively that for the Tikopia, poetry and music have not only been intimately involved together, but have also been shaped if not engendered by the demands of vital social action. They have been created, as it were, as an aesthetic extension of social action, or even part of the expression of social action. Not that all Tikopia songs have been produced in the midst of practical social activity. Many songs of sailing or other craft work have been essentially recollections in tranquillity. But they have been based upon experiences of an intense kind demanding a full concentration upon the technical scene. Other songs have

been imaginative constructs, describing thoughts or fantasies of the composer rather than actual events. But to understand the design and meaning of the song one needs an action frame of reference.

Yet the demands of social action may have tended to inhibit the Tikopia from developing their poetry more elaborately. Their pragmatic requirements may well have kept their interest in abstraction to a fairly low level, and not tempted them to pursue the conceptual intricacies of poetry, and its formal possibilities, for their own sake. The permutations of verbal structures in which they have engaged have been relatively simple, and their imagery, though vivid, remains at a fairly descriptive level.

The fact that until recently no Tikopia songs were written down may have tended to inhibit development of their more exploratory character. But as studies of Ruth Finnegan and others have amply shown, many of the myths, songs and epic poems of people who were not literate have shown great insight and understanding of the human condition, illuminating our knowledge of man and his environment in a way which can be intellectually stimulating and emotionally poignant. Many of these studies have been done under the head of 'oral literature'. Though I myself have used the expression 'unwritten literature' (Firth 1936: 284) it seems to me preferable to keep the term literature for written or printed forms of expression. But the categorisation is not clear-cut. Be that as it may, it is important to note that the oral presentation and transmission of aesthetic material involves some different conditions from those pertaining to literary material. A *listening* audience has different potentialities for interpersonal reaction than does a set of *readers*, a collective rather than a diffused response. The possibilities for variation in transmission are also different. This is so, whether the oral presentation is in traditional style with speaker present, or crowd chanting in unison, or in modern style by radio, with speaker communicating with audience at a distance.

Traditionally, then, in Tikopia there was no poetry or music for its own sake. Poems were not composed just for recitation nor musical compositions produced simply for the pleasure of listening to them. The Tikopia recognised formal linguistic structures of a kind called poems in English, distinguishing them from other formal language structures such as prayer, magical invocation or address of praise. But whereas these were called respectively *taro, tarotaro* and *oriori*, for 'poem' they had no separate term. It was classed in song terms, as a dance song (*mako*), lament (*fuatanga*) etc. The situation is much the same nowadays, though Tikopia are now familiar with western practice also. In traditional Tikopia the conception of a poem seems to have been of formal language in a specific musical setting.

In abstraction Tikopia songs might be considered as part of a total acoustic field, amid a daily mixture of vibrations of various kinds: roar of surf on the reef; chatter of ordinary conversation; thud of adze on log in carpentry or of barkcloth beater on wooden slab. Such mingling of sounds

in relatively low key may be interrupted by a high-pitched yell of a man celebrating some economic achievement such as the catch of a hundred fish, or protesting a theft from his orchard. More rarely, an explosive beating of house thatch or a shot from a gun may announce a traumatic event such as the death of a man of rank. It is against such a fabric of sounds that the patterned vibrations of song occur and are interpreted by listeners. It is not possible for me to analyse Tikopia song in this holistic setting. But perhaps such a setting has had some significance for the form that Tikopia music has taken. (For the interpretation of modern western music it may be relevant to take account of the mechanised noises of traffic by road and air, with other industrialised sounds of contemporary urban and rural life.)

The Tikopia musical form has been primarily vocalic, with little instrumentation, and that essentially percussive and rhythmic (see later). The act of singing, the production of vocal sound in recognised tonal patterns, is termed by the Tikopia *pese*, and a song is most generally described as *te pese*, that which is sung. Another term, *tangi*, may also refer to singing, as in the little songs which punctuate some traditional narratives (*kai*); such songs are known as *tangi kai*. But *tangi* is commonly associated with crying, or formal wailing (as in the long drawn-out mourning cry *E-e ! Aue-e !* at a funeral) and therefore tends to apply mainly to the singing of laments.

**Social dimension**

Tikopia songs have had a very marked social dimension. While the songs express thoughts and feelings of individual composers, such as affection to a kinsman, respect to a chief, memory of past experiences abroad, pleasure in craft work or challenge to a member of the opposite sex, the social parameters to all this are evident. Moreover, many songs have been composed in response, not just to personal urgings, but to social demand, to meet some specific social purpose. Such purposes have been very varied, ranging from ordinary dancing to competitive dance festivals, from the initiation of a boy to his departure overseas, from praising the bounty of a chief to mourning his death in a funeral or celebrating his annual rite of religious worship of gods and ancestors. The conventional requirements of the occasion, according to Tikopia custom, have imposed burdens of song composition upon designated individuals, and often involved planning a long time ahead. The Tikopia have had no institution akin to the West African *griot*, or to any western poet laureate. But though skill in song composition has not been accorded any specific office or title, such a skilled person is included in the general category of *purotu*, those wise in social expertise. In Tikopia song production there has been a clearcut line between spontaneous composition and meeting the deadline of a social occasion.

The social dimension of songs is given by theme and occasion of

performance. But there is also a bodily frame of reference, expressing social norms. A song is not simply a vocal display; it takes place in a context of physical movement of patterned type. The intoning of a chant in a myth or of a jingle by a child in a game may have little patterned accompaniment. But the singing of a funeral dirge is often marked by formal movement of hand or arm, as by raising and lowering a palm leaf fan in time to the chant, or (if a man) by striking the breast with the fist. In most types of dance there is vigorous bodily movement of rhythmic kind, often with highly structured gestures of hands and arms in progressive style. In recreation the integration is such that poem, sung recital and dancing activity are all described by the single term *mako*.

## Song typology

Tikopia classification of songs is as much social as musical. The distinctions among the named types imply reference to the purposes which a song is intended to serve and not just to its specific musical character. All songs may be termed *pese*. Granting this, for a great majority of songs a primary distinction is made between *mako* and *fuatanga*. *Mako*, a term applying basically, probably, to dance movement itself, are songs appropriate to recreation and situations of pleasure, especially as accompaniment to dance. *Fuatanga* are songs appropriate to serious personal concern, sometimes eulogistic of living persons, but commonly expressive of crises of life, ultimately those of death and mourning or the memory of illustrious dead. *Fuatanga* tend to correspond broadly to the western classical notion of *elegy*. Since so many have been associated with funerals I have often translated the term as *dirge*, but considering the breadth of their themes and performance, I now think *lament* a preferable rendering. In style, there are many variations, especially in *mako*, but generally, *mako* tend to be more lively than *fuatanga*, sung in higher register and in faster tempo. Broadly they may be thought of as gay and grave respectively. Textually, it is not always possible to distinguish them; the primary distinction is musical. Traditionally, there have been intermediate types between *mako* and *fuatanga*, especially in songs on the more sacred ritual occasions. Within each of the two main categories are also a number of sub-categories.

## Mako

Almost a score of different types of *mako* songs are recognised, corresponding to dances of different styles. Each style of dance is distinguished by special features – whether displayed in mass or having scope for individual male expertise; using only movements of head and limbs or having aids of club, wand or dance bat; involving simple progression to and fro or

elaborately patterned movement . . . and so on. (see chapter 4). So, the most popular dance among young people, the *matāvaka*, is commonly a solid mass of dancers of both sexes, moving up and down the dance ground with tossing heads and an alternate sideways flinging out of clasped hands. By contrast, in a *ngore*, which often uses the same song text, the dancers move out in line, men with legs wide apart and quick sideways jumps, women with legs together and a forward shuffle. Musically, the melodic line of a *matāvaka* and a *ngore* may be very similar, often with the same poetic text; but whereas the rhythm of a *matāvaka* is quick and even, regulated by a steady beat upon a sounding board, that of a *ngore* is slow, regulated by the handclap of a group of seated people. Another type, the *sea*, involves a showy display of quickly succeeding hand and foot gestures demanding great skill, often with accelerated rhythm towards the end of the dance by a virtuoso performer. By contrast again, the *mori*, the most elaborate Tikopia dance form, has a series of musical frames varying in rhythm and melodic line in accord with the developing phases of the dance, with its alternate emphasis on mass movement and individual emergence of dancers.

**Fuatanga**

A *fuatanga* may be described as an unrhymed ode, sung in plaintive style, or a poem composed in the elegaic mode. A *fuatanga* is demonstrably different from other song types in both musical style and manner of performance. Though many have been composed in funerary contexts, the themes of others have been wide-ranging, from farewell to a departing voyager to reflection on some historical event, or the praise of a chief or of a god. One type of *fuatanga*, the *soa* sung as a dirge for a dead spouse, often began its musical career years before as a praise song for the spouse when alive. Many *fuatanga* have been traditional ritual songs originally composed for the ceremonial feast for a chief and afterwards transferred to serve in the religious rites of Uta. These songs are distinguished not by any particular quality of mourning but by an air of solemnity appropriate to the celebration of the names and attributes of prime ancestors and gods in the traditional religion. The Tikopia have had a great respect for such traditional laments, and old examples are often recalled and sung as occasion arises. Such songs were once described to me as 'the conversation of people at night – the yarning of the elders and of the young men', meaning that they often formed a subject of discussion when people were at leisure. When recalled from the memory bank, such laments were used selectively. When I was attending an initiation ceremony for a boy in 1928 it was pointed out to me that the songs chanted on such occasions were never laments for the dead; but while still laments, they were songs relating to overseas voyages and other dangerous activities, *fuatanga* which showed

sympathy for the lad undergoing the traumatic bodily operation akin to circumcision. Unlike dance songs, most *fuatanga* were chanted by people seated in houses, but some mourning songs were sung in the open, as when a widow was in transit between houses of her kin. Most religious *fuatanga* were sung in the open, on a sacred site. Of one ritual song addressed to the premier pagan deity, the Atua i Kafika, I was told: 'We intone the elegy of the god to sing it as we walk along.'

Given the Tikopia preoccupation with kinship (Firth 1936), it is understandable that a common mode of reference to *fuatanga* should be by their type of kin orientation – lament for a father, for a mother, for a sister etc. But musically, while each lament may have its own melodic line, no particular melodic frame seems to be attached to any particular type of kin song. Musical differences do not appear to occur either between these and other broad types of *fuatanga*, e.g. songs eulogistic of spouse or bond-friend (*soa*) and some ancient religious songs sung during 'the Work of the Gods' (Firth 1967b). However, the term *fuatanga* was sometimes applied rather indiscriminately to ancient ritual songs. The Ariki Taumako in 1966 sung for me what he described as an important and cherished dance song, but also as 'a *fuatanga* of my house' (see no. 106 in Part III).

A vivid description of a funeral lament as actually performed has been given by Norma McLeod, from accounts provided to her by myself and Spillius, and from listening to recorded events. She noted the sobbing, broken voices in which the dirge is sung. 'The heart-rending sound of voices raised in what seem to be cries of utter agony makes it almost impossible to distinguish the music at first; then gradually the drone of the voices establishes itself and is perceived in the midst of a host of other sounds, as people cry, thump their chests, speak aloud to one another, and join in or drop out of the song at intermittent intervals. The song is unisonal, but occasionally, as the melody drops out of range for some, the voices spread into octaves, giving a suddenly spine-chilling effect. They then come together again in unisons which sound just as startling by contrast. This constant shift from unison to octave is one of the most pronounced effects of the dirge as a whole and tends to support the general feeling of the funeral occasion very well.' Norma McLeod also observed 'the practice of drawing the notes out to almost incredible lengths' which is one of the most marked musical features of the lament (McLeod 1957: 180–1).

**Relative frequency of song types**

In performance of Tikopia songs the balance between *mako* and *fuatanga* has been affected by a number of factors. At the crudest physical level, since most dances have taken place outside houses on open dance grounds, and most singing of laments took place inside houses, the prevailing weather

was a factor in determining their frequency. But though generally dances are stopped by heavy rain, in the traditional Dance of the Flaming Fire in the ritual of the Work of the Gods in 1928 some young people felt obliged to dance on amid the drenching rain squalls (Firth 1967a: 360–1). Funeral songs can continue indoors despite the weather. Again, in the fishing season it may be hard to get dance songs under way, since the young men prefer to go out after flying fish rather than to join young women and elders in recreation on shore. But while fishing takes precedence over dancing, mourning takes precedence over fishing. And to mourners closely related to a dead person both fishing and dancing are barred, possibly for several months. The singing of elegies or laments is determined not only by mortality; injury to a person or departure abroad stimulates the singing of *fuatanga* too. But while observance of funerary custom, including singing of laments, is mandatory upon close kin of an injured, deceased or absent person, those less nearly related are much freer. Hence while some people in the community are mourning, others may dance and sing light-hearted songs. If a person of rank has died then a whole district or even the whole island community will refrain from dancing. But if it be the young child of a commoner who has died, only immediate kin and local people observe the mourning restrictions, and people in other villages, especially on the other side of the island, may indulge in dancing. Moreover, though folk in the village of mourning will not dance locally, those of them not nearly related may well go off without embarrassment to dance in another village. So, in a sense, singing for sorrow and singing for pleasure are often intertwined in Tikopia.

In 1928–9, when I first lived in Tikopia, I took note of the frequency of dancing and funerals, and so by implication of the relative singing of *mako* and *fuatanga*. Out of 350 days of record, on almost exactly half (a minimum of 172) I recorded singing of a public or semi-public character, on small or large scale, somewhere in the Tikopia community. On about 90 of these days there was singing of dance songs, either at a local village dance or at a district dance, and on about 10 of these occasions the festival involved people of both sides of the island, with considerable formality. By comparison, on about 100 days, laments of some kind were being sung, mainly as mourning obligation; there was some overlap when dance songs were sung in one locality and mourning songs in another, on the same day. In 1952 there was a high frequency of mourning songs during the 140 days of my residence, because of many deaths owing to food shortage and epidemic disease. But even then on at least 24 days – about one-sixth of the period – there was singing for dancing, including several festivals. Dancing was even promoted by men of rank as a means of raising the spirits of the people in this time of depression. In 1966, for about a month, despite two funerals, singing with dancing occurred on at least 10 nights, with some less

active singing in western style with stringed accompaniment on other occasions as well. It can be seen then that singing both of *mako* and of *fuatanga* has been a common and important feature of Tikopia social life.

But though the distinction between *mako* and *fuatanga* is fairly clear-cut, by rhythm, melody, manner of performance and social occasion, the distribution of these two types of song is not rigidly exclusive. For dancing only *mako* are sung. But for a farewell either a *mako fakamāvae* or a *fuatanga fakamāvae*, a dance song or a lament of parting may be sung. (It may be that in modern times a cheerful dance song of parting has become more admissible now that voyages overseas have become much less dangerous with the advent of mechanised shipping.) In the traditional religious ritual of Marae in Uta most of the songs were classed as *mako*, but the *sōre*, chanted separately by men and by women, were classed as *fuatanga*. A spectacular juxtaposition of *mako* and *fuatanga* may occur during the funeral of a young man, when in the midst of the mourning laments a dance song is chanted and a dance performed. This is known as *mako fakamāvae* or *mako pariki*, farewell dance or funeral dance, the idea being to say a sad goodbye to the recreational side of the young man's life. (For an example see Chapter 3.) That such a dance song could be classed under the general head of *tangisaki*, wailing, showed how its performance was understood to be an act of mourning, not of rejoicing.

**Ritual songs**

The major recognised categories of *mako* and *fuatanga* account for most Tikopia secular songs. But for anthropological analysis of the ritual complexities in traditional song performance, and of modern developments, information is needed about certain sub-categories and kinds of song which fall outside the major division into dance song and lament or elegy.

Traditional religious songs have been abandoned since about 1955, after complete conversion of all Tikopia from paganism to Christianity. A few only have been revived spasmodically as performances for recreational use, as illustrations of ancient custom. Since I have described such songs fairly fully elsewhere (Firth 1967a: Ch. 3; 1967b: Chs. 8 and 9) I give only a brief outline here.

There have been two main sets of such ritual songs.

One set comprises the dance songs associated with what I have termed 'privilege ceremonies' – special ritual performances regarded as the property of certain leading lineages, such as the *Kura* of Marinoa and the *Ruku* of Sao, Korokoro and Akauroro, or the *Fakararokoka* songs at a celebration for girls of high-ranking families. The songs for all these seemed to me to have an archaic air. Many of them were simple in form, hard to

interpret, and made frequent reference to the Heavens and to spiritual beings. They were idiosyncratic among dance songs.

The second set of songs consisted of those chanted during the ritual dancing in the monsoon season, around December in our calendar, in the sacred inland district of Uta on the assembly ground known as Marae, adjacent to some of the ancient clan temples. These ritual songs of Uta, of which I noted the text of more than 60, comprise about 8 types, each separately named and requiring very different types of performance. Most were termed *mako*, and the singing was accompanied by gestures and bodily movements of recognisably dance kind. But some, termed *sōre*, were classed as *fuatanga*, and performed very soberly. Many of these openly mentioned names of gods and ancestors ordinarily concealed. They were divided into sections according to textual content and degree of sacredness, not on musical grounds. The first half dozen or so songs were chanted by the men, to the accompaniment of gentle clapping of hand on hand or knee, while the Ariki Taumako, as a traditional privilege, tapped with his hand on a sounding board. During these songs the women stayed silent. When their turn came they sang these elegies as they beat time with fans held in their hands.

Another category of Tikopia traditional song, neither dance song nor lament, were the *tangi kai*. These formed part of the recital of mythic tales and were interspersed as formal verse chants at critical moments in the narrative, as when a character was about to take off from the mortal to the spirit world (Firth 1961: 189). (A record of a somewhat trivial *tangi kai* is given in no. 84 of Part III and on master tape.)

Another traditional type of song is very simple, comprising a few jingles sung by children as part of some games, and known just as *pese* – songs. An example is a formula chanted to lure a kind of small crab out of its hole in the reef (Firth 1967a: 202). Also described as a *tarotaro*, a ritual formula, the words were intoned as a ditty after the fashion of a dance song.

**Modern songs**

This book deals with traditional Tikopia songs. But how far have modern influences changed Tikopia music? Effective contact with western industrial-type culture began early in the nineteenth century, but altered Tikopia traditional culture mainly only on the material side, especially by the introduction of iron and steel implements. Even by the time of my first visit, in 1928, there was still great scarcity of knives, adzes, fishhooks, and also of calico, all much desired. In the religious sphere, contact with the Anglican Melanesian Mission had been sporadic since the mid nineteenth century but not until about 1903 were Melanesian Mission teachers allowed to settle on Tikopia, and conversion of the people of the district of Faea, the first

mass movement to Christianity, occurred only in the early 1920s. Tikopia songs seem to have been affected by all this initially in theme, by reference to overseas voyages to lands of the white man; and in text by inclusion of occasional words from 'pijin' English. Musical form seemed unaffected. But early in the twentieth century the population was introduced to a new form of composition, the Christian hymn. The texts of these hymns were then in Mota, a Banks Islands language which the Melanesian Mission had adopted as its lingua franca. The musical form was one of European melodic line, but sung in a Pacific mode, with much *portamento* and some modification of intervals, and without instrumentation. Meanwhile, as the notes of W. J. Durrad, a priest of the Mission who lived for a couple of months on Tikopia in 1910 show, traditional song forms, of what he called 'love songs' (*mako*) and funeral dirges (*fuatanga*) were in general vogue, as they have continued to be until now.

Until recent years the traditional conventions about proper occasions for singing dance songs and laments still held. But after the conversion of all Tikopia to Christianity about the end of 1955, all pagan religious occasions for chanting ritual songs ceased. And as Christianity had advanced in the community, the growing influence of the Church had tended to alter matters. For example, the Church has inhibited dancing during Lent. More than fifty years ago this abstention tended to be observed throughout the whole Tikopia community, since from politeness and discretionary respect for the one Christian chief nearly all pagan young people kept the Christian taboo. By 1952 all pagans as well as all Christians were observing not only the rule of no dancing in Lent, but also the rule of 'no work', i.e. no productive activity, on Good Friday. On Easter Saturday the recarpeting of churches was performed (analogous to the traditional periodic recarpeting of pagan temples); then on Easter Sunday taboos were lifted, food was prepared, Holy Communion was taken by Christians, and the dance was formally beaten. So the singing of dance songs, so long intermitted for pagans as well as Christians, could now be resumed by them both. In modern times the Church has taken over the organisation of many dance festivals which used to be purely secular, and recreational activities involving singing are governed to a high degree by the framework of church and associated school programmes. Only in funerals, as far as I know, is there still a place for fully traditional wailing and song.

The greatest modern change in music, however, has been the introduction of songs in western style, which are especially popular among young people. As mentioned earlier, these are commonly sung with no particular action, often to accompaniment of ukulele or guitar, and have borrowed and adapted foreign 'jingle' melodies. These developments have been due especially to the migration of many Tikopia abroad into other Solomon islands as workers of various kinds, and to the education of many young

Tikopia in schools away from the island. Their access to equipment such as tape recorders and cassettes has accelerated the process of exposure to alien musical influences. While so far what may be termed 'Polynesian pop' or 'Pacific pop' has tended to occupy a niche of its own and not radically displace *mako* and *fuatanga*, it undoubtedly poses a threat to the survival of traditional Tikopia music.

Since this book as a whole is not intended to deal with such modern developments, I give only a few details here of some Tikopia forms which these westernised models had assumed at a fairly early stage, in 1966.

These westernised songs are generally known as *pese* or *pese fuere* – just singing. Current particularly among school children and young people, they include *pese vakivaki* – songs of enjoyment, just for pleasure; *pese māvae* – songs of parting, farewells; and *pese papalangi* – songs of white people. Except for the last, in English words, while the melodic line has been definitely based upon a simple western model, the text is usually in Tikopia, though interlarded with alien words, partly for euphony and partly for prestige.

The following song was composed by a school teacher in Nukufero (a Tikopia settlement in the Russell Islands) prior to 1966. It was said to have no dance corresponding to it, but just to be sung by the schoolboys, for their enjoyment. The initial stanza (not quoted here) was a mixture of words from various sources, and unintelligible as ordinary speech. The stanza given here is mainly in Tikopia, but with a couple of English words disguised.

| | |
|---|---|
| *Matou e mamako nei* | We dancing here |
| *E vakivaki mātea* | Are rejoicing mightily |
| *Mā ni kamu danīai* | And too have come to dance |
| *Mau fainga mātea.* | In our great doings. |

Another song of this type was addressed to a European who came to look after Tikopia men working on a nearby plantation at Samata. He was much liked by the Tikopia schoolboys of Nukufero, and to tease him they composed this joking song.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| *Tafito:* | *Mr Holland, Holland i–e!* | Mr Holland, Holland oh, oh! |
| | *E muna i mua, muna tatua mai* | Spoke first, spoke lies |
| | *Ki a matou.* | To us. |
| *Kupu:* | *Ko matou run away* | We are running away |
| | *I kunei i Samata* | From here, from Samata |
| | *Ka tafito te wesis* | Reason is, the wages |
| | *E pariki.* | Are so bad. |

The allegation that Mr Holland made false promises and the boys were bolting was not serious. The song illustrates the modern fusion of Tikopia and English language, the lively interest of Tikopia youth in song, and the light-hearted, humorous, sometimes malicious tone of many such compositions.

But some of these modern songs, meant for what may be called 'musical evenings' in houses at night, to accompaniment of ukulele, are often not much more than simple repetition of phrases. So, a popular ditty of 1966 was

| | |
|---|---|
| *Tasi e rūa, tasi e toru* | One is two, one is three |
| *Tasi e rūa, tasi e toru* | One is two, one is three |
| *E toru e sokotasi* | And three are one |

The crooning of this song over and over by a group of young people was done with great enthusiasm. It seemed to have no esoteric significance, though the awareness of singing nonsense may have given them a fillip.

Another very popular crooning song consisted essentially of *Tēnei te aso . . . ka māvae ra* – 'This is the day . . . when we must part', repeated over and over again. This song was originally composed by a school teacher to say goodbye to some visiting missionaries, but by 1966 had been adopted as an ordinary 'pop' song. For a farewell concert to the anthropologists Torben Monberg and myself in 1966, the programme included a special composition in honour of us, expressing affection, sung by the local school, who had learnt it for the occasion. It was accompanied by five ukuleles. This was followed by a Reef Island song; a Samoan song; a Maori song; a Tikopia song with the refrain of *Tangi auē*! – wailing alas!; a Hawaiian *hula* 'in Tikopia style' without action; a 'cowboy song' in English; and a charming Tikopia song *Te po laui* – Goodnight. All this mixture was sung in cheerful tuneful style, without harmonisation, and even the smallest children joining in. It was a sample of much modern Tikopia music.

**Traditional poem structure**

The formal regularity of Tikopia poems serving as song texts is dictated partly by the type of song and musical frame envisaged, but also by certain rules for the oral text. The oral text of a poem has two features which distinguish it from ordinary speech, and give it a poetic character. The first is its rhythmic patterns. The poetic form of Tikopia songs is marked by combinations of stressed and unstressed syllables with some degree of regularity. The Tikopia have been completely uninterested in rhyme, in parallel development of syllabic endings or phrase alignments. As with all Tikopia speech, every syllable ends with a vowel, but no special sequence of vowel endings of words seems relevant to a poem. What does seem